
Preface

Should I do it or not? That was the question I was faced with in 2006 when asked to write a book about pot-limit Omaha. I knew that it would be an awful lot of work, and that it would probably take me months to complete things – time that I could probably put to better use in the online PLO games that were very juicy at the time. Also, I could not expect this book to be (financially) very rewarding, given that the PLO market was so small back then. And perhaps most importantly, I knew that if I were to take on this new project, I would give it my all, and I would hold back absolutely nothing. But by revealing my rather unconventional strategies, and by providing my readers with an extensive step by step approach that could be considered the “101 on shortstacking”, I knew I would make the online PLO games much tougher. In fact, I knew that if I would reveal everything I knew at the time, there was a good chance I would be killing my own bread-and-butter games.

And indeed – this is exactly what happened. When I was still writing the script for *Secrets of Professional Pot-Limit Omaha*, I was a solid winner at Party, where I was multitableting/shortstacking the \$10-\$20 games. In fact, right after I had completed this script, I was able to step up to the \$25-\$50 games at Stars where I employed a similar system – and with similar (and thus, better) results.

But within six months after the release of my book, there was hardly a game left at the stakes where I liked to play. My book had led to an influx

Secrets of Short-Handed Pot-Limit Omaha

of a whole bunch of shortstacking/ratholing “Little Rolfs” who would follow my ultra-tight shortstack approach religiously. It goes without saying that this did not exactly benefit the quality of the games. More and more often, the Action Men would be faced with four, five or even six shortstackers who were waiting to bag them. And while this of course made the shortstack system much less effective (with too many short stacks and too little loose money, the approach loses a lot of its value), it also meant that the Action Men stopped giving the excessive action that they used to give. The PLO games now being a lot less juicy and exciting than before, the Action Men started straying away from the full-ring games and began to focus on 6-max games – not in the last place to get rid of those pesky short stacks.

Using an approach that was perfectly suited for full-ring games and that was almost inexhaustible for the bigger stacks, I obviously did not like this development much. While I had already adopted my tactics in such a way that I was not only a superb shortstacker but also someone who could profitably employ a big-stack approach if the table composition dictated such, this was always from the framework of full-ring play. I was a lot less proficient at playing 6-max., where the blind pressure was much higher, where the rake had a bigger impact, and where the loose-aggressive action seemed to favor the gamblers – rather than the tight, disciplined nits like me. After all, because hand values run rather close in PLO, the loose-aggressive players (LAPs, from now on) would pick up more than their fair share of pots almost regardless of their cards. And for tight players like me, it was very hard to recoup these losses when we would finally pick up a big hand, simply because even in these cases our edge would usually not be all that big. It was quite clear to me that in this shorthanded constellation, my shortstack approach would not be very effective. And given that my big stack game was not yet good enough, the only alternative for these 6-max games was using the 30-40 big blinds medium-sized-buy-in approach that I touched upon in my previous book.

While still sticking to the full-ring shortstack approach whenever I could find these games, I slowly started fine-tuning my six-handed strategies. And when in January 2008 I signed a deal to become a sponsored pro for T-6 Poker, a site that had *just* shorthanded games, I knew I had found a new challenge. Having agreed to log in many hours per month at this site, and playing a minimum of three tables, the only way this deal would be

good to me was if I could become a winning shorthanded player at the decent-sized games. A new and difficult challenge – in other words, exactly the way I like it!

The end result of all this is the book that you are reading now – *Secrets of Shorthanded Pot-Limit Omaha*. It discusses short games when playing deep stacks, medium stacks and short stacks. It explains my new approach to the game: full-stacked and fairly loose-aggressive, with – as before – some rather unconventional betting patterns. It shows the “Real Poker” that I am playing now, instead of just the “exploitation of badly structured games” that my shortstacked full-ring approach was based upon.

But more than just me, this book has no other than Rob Hollink doing what he does best: analyze hands taken from high-stakes play. Through the combination of both our (often conflicting!) views, *Secrets of Shorthanded Pot-Limit Omaha* should fill the gap that my previous book has left: a thorough discussion of six-handed and also heads up games. It is my genuine belief that the combination of my first and this second PLO book is basically everything you need to become a successful Omaha player for meaningful stakes. However, a few words of caution are needed. Just like my previous work, this new book does *not* provide a coherent game plan, and it isn't written in a textbook manner. What you read is purely our views on how to tackle games – nothing more, nothing less. You are required to do a lot of thinking of your own, and it is up to the reader to put all the relevant information together in a correct manner. What's more, the level of analysis is at times quite high, making the information not always easy to digest. There is almost no discussion on specific starting hand strategy (you can find more than enough about that in other books), and also we have left out much of the mathematics and statistics that accounted to such a prominent part of the previous PLO book. We don't explain any of the terms and abbreviations that were already used in the first book, assuming this should be basic knowledge by now. And finally, the information we provide is far from an absolute truth. Quite the contrary: Rob and I differ on many issues, and some of the strange plays in this book obviously carry my signature, while some of the rather crazy plays from Rob's high-stakes games would be definite money-burners in the much smaller games that I tend to play.

In other words: If you expect an ABC type of book that starts with starting hands/preflop play all the way to the final chapter on playing the river,

Secrets of Short-Handed Pot-Limit Omaha

you have picked the wrong book. As before, I will be using my own development and experiences as the groundwork for this book – meaning I will again talk a lot about myself, my abilities and my shortcomings. The book basically begins where *Secrets of Professional Pot-Limit Omaha* left off – the step from medium-sized full-ring PLO games on the major sites to the relatively small six-handed games on my new site, where slowly but surely I am able to lift my game, plug my leaks, rise in limits and in the end also start focusing on heads-up play.

All in all, this book is simply *my* story on how to focus on something entirely new (where through my usual step-by-step approach I show which adjustments are needed to keep getting better and better at shorthanded play), followed by the sometimes entirely different view of high-stakes pro Rob Hollink who analyzes specific hands. As I said, not a lot of “how to” information in the strictest sense of the word, and maybe not a lot of structured thinking either. Yet, I have little doubt that those who look for more than just quick and shallow answers will judge *Secrets of Shorthanded Pot-Limit Omaha* as interesting, thought-provoking and different. And perhaps most importantly: as very worthwhile.

Rolf Slotboom

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